

FOR  
TEACHERS  
OF TEENS  
AGES 15-17

# SENIOR HIGH BIBLE TEACHER

WINTER QUARTER | DECEMBER | JANUARY | FEBRUARY 2023-24



# Senior High Bible Teacher

WINTER QUARTER

December 2023, January, February 2024

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# The Weeks Ahead

It is a little phrase, but oh, what a huge difference it makes: “in Christ.” This phrase occurs a multitude of times in the New Testament, and we may find that we pass over it all too easily. But the believer’s relationship with Christ is in fact the foundation of all his hope and joy.

In this quarter’s lessons, we explore the implications of living in Christ. In our first unit, as we approach Christmas, we explore some of the dimensions of our new life in Christ as Paul lays them out in his epistle to the Philippians. We learn that Christ is not just part of our life; He *is* our life. This truth should lead us to understand what is really valuable to us and to learn contentment in Him as well.

Then, on the eve of our celebration of Christ’s birth, we will focus on the Word becoming flesh; He is the bright Light for a dark world. As we shall see from the book of Ephesians, it is our role to live as children of light.

In the quarter’s second unit, we will continue in Ephesians and consider some of the ways in which Christ transforms the lives of His followers. The glorious foundation of this transformation is that we have been graciously chosen and adopted in Christ. How amazing that we have been blessed by God from eternity past, a blessing that will last for all eternity to come.

From Ephesians 2 we see how we are the workmanship of God. In Christ we have been shaped and molded to fulfill God’s kingdom purposes. And we are not alone in our labors. God has placed us in a loving spiritual family that

stands as a great testimony to a world riven by hatreds and conflict.

Lesson 8 brings us to Ephesians 4 and a further exploration of what it means to be part of Christ’s spiritual family. It is a high calling. The Lord has bestowed wonderful spiritual gifts upon His people, and we are to use them in unity of purpose, bringing glory thereby to our risen Lord.

Every part of our lives should reflect the fact that we are in Christ. That truth certainly applies to our earthly families. In lesson 9, we will see how the human family was designed to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church.

Our final unit this quarter deals with some of the practical ways in which to live our lives so that they reflect the fact that we belong to Christ. We will begin with the great passage from Ephesians 6 concerning the spiritual armor of God.

Then lessons 11 and 12, taken from Colossians, remind us that our day-to-day lives need to be rooted in the foundational truths of Christ’s preeminence. We are complete in Him, the Lord of all, so we need not look anywhere else for life and sustenance.

The quarter closes with the book of Philemon and the reminder that we are to model the forgiveness that Christ has extended to us. It is our hope that this quarter’s lessons will help you orient your life around Christ, the One by whom and for whom all things exist.

—Stephen H. Barnhart.

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# The Blessing of Being “in Christ”

Christians do not always have a firm grasp on what it means to belong to Christ. We may tend to view it as a kind of business transaction. We carried a load of guilt for which we could not atone. Christ bore that guilt for us on the cross so that we would not have to endure eternal punishment. We are grateful for what He has done, so we try to pray and do what the Bible tells us to do. We remember Calvary and look forward to heaven.

Now all of the above is true—gloriously true! We have been redeemed by Christ from eternal condemnation. He paid the price for our sins by his death and resurrection. That is the gospel message. But the good news does not end there. The truth is that all who have come to faith in Christ have entered into a vital and living relationship with Him.

This living relationship is captured by the little phrase “in Christ.” The phrase occurs about seventy-five times in the King James Version of the Bible, including eleven times in the Scripture passages that we are looking at in this quarter’s lessons. This is a huge topic, so let us look at just these eleven verses and see what they reveal to us about this amazing connection that believers have with the Lord Jesus, a connection that is not just in the past or in the future but exists even now.

The subject for this quarter’s lesson is “Living in Christ.” The first unit addresses our “New Life in Christ.” As we learn in Ephesians 2, we were once dead in sin, but Jesus gave us new life. He indeed is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

With this as background, it might surprise us that in our first encounter with the phrase “in Christ,” the apostle Paul refers to his “bonds in Christ” (Phil. 1:13). That does not sound like a cause for joy! What we learn, though, is that Paul was willing to endure much injustice and hardship if it meant becoming more like Christ and advancing His kingdom. Christ endured much suffering, and knowing Him better will involve suffering in His followers (cf. Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24). Being “in Christ” means sharing in His burdens as well as His glory.

In the second of our eleven verses this quarter with the phrase “in Christ,” Paul writes of pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). Our calling in Christ should call forth our most ardent efforts and lead us one day to the greatest prize there is—perfect fellowship with God. And we also learn from this verse that anything we accomplish will be through Christ.

Over half of our eleven references to the phrase “in Christ” occur in Ephesians 1 and 2. It is no coincidence that these two chapters are among the richest in the Bible concerning the blessings of God’s grace.

Every good spiritual gift comes to the Christian through and in Christ. As 1:3 declares, we have been “blessed . . . with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” The reference to the “heavenly places” reminds us of the mysterious and marvelous truth that we are already seated spiritually with Christ in heaven (a truth that we will see again in 2:6).

Ephesians 1:10 refers to God the

Father's intention to have all things come together in one "in Christ." This is similar in thought to the great passage in Colossians 1 that sets forth Christ's preeminence. Christ is the Head of the created order, and He is the Head of the church, which will preside with Him over the new creation (Col. 1:16-20). Being in Christ, we will partake with Him in His reign.

The next reference comes two verses later (Eph. 1:12). This allusion to trusting "in Christ" does not carry quite the same sense as in the other passages we are looking at, but it still reminds us that Christ is the object of our faith, the One from whom all spiritual blessings flow.

Moving on to Ephesians 2, verse 6 refers again to our sitting in heavenly places "in Christ." Then, in verse 10, Paul declares that we have been "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Yes, we have been saved *from* the guilt and condemnation of sin, but we have also been saved *to* a life of fruitful and joyful obedience and service in Christ's kingdom. Here is found a life of purpose that will bring everlasting satisfaction. It is through our relationship with Jesus that we experience this life.

The last Ephesians reference to the phrase "in Christ" in this quarter's lessons is 2:13: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." In this verse, Paul is reminding his Gentile Christian readers of how greatly they have been blessed by Christ. Through Christ's atoning sacrifice, they have been united with God and with Jewish believers as well. The barrier between Jew and Gentile has been broken down.

Our lessons this quarter include only one of the four times in Colossians that Paul uses the phrase "in Christ." This reference picks up in a way on what he said in Ephesians 2:13. (The other three instances in Colossians are

found in 1:2, 1:4, and 2:5. They would be well worth looking up and meditating on whenever the opportunity arises.) In 1:28 the apostle says that he preached especially to the Gentiles so that "we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Paul is pointing toward the ultimate goal of the gospel—a special people, fully mature in Christ, who will glorify the Lord for eternity. Whether Jew or Gentile, we are justified in Christ, and in Christ we are sanctified as well.

Our final two references come from Paul's letter to Philemon. In these verses we are given a vivid example of how being "in Christ" should translate into our daily lives. Paul is urging Philemon to extend forgiveness to his newly converted runaway slave, Onesimus. Paul wants Philemon to reflect on all the blessings he has received "in Christ" (vs. 6), including forgiveness, with the understanding that he should reflect these blessings in the way he treats others.

The last reference to "in Christ" this quarter is found in verse 8. Because of his authority as an apostle and in light of the fact that Christ has been so gracious to Philemon, Paul says he could be "bold in Christ" and order him to accept back Onesimus. But instead, the apostle simply makes a request, no doubt confident that the riches of Philemon's relationship in Christ will prompt him to be loving. Being "in Christ" bears good spiritual fruit in our lives.

This all too brief summary of "in Christ" passages will hopefully whet your appetite to further explore this rich topic. Because we are "in Christ," we are justified, we are being sanctified, and we are united for eternity with our Saviour and with our fellow believers. Let us be thankful for these rich blessings!

—Stephen H. Barnhart.

# SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**PHIL. 1:12** But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

**13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;**

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

**15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:**

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

**17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.**

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

**19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your**

**prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,**

20 According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.

**21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.**

22 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

**23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:**

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you.

**25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;**

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

## NOTES

# To Live Is Christ

Lesson Text: Philippians 1:12-26

Related Scriptures: Acts 28:11-16, 30-31; I Corinthians 3:5-9;  
II Corinthians 5:1-9; II Timothy 4:6-8

TIME: A.D. 60-61

PLACE: from Rome

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"In nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Philippians 1:20).

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## *Studying the Text*

A woman who had been bitten by a stray dog listened to the bad news—the dog had infected her with rabies. When the woman immediately got out paper and began to write, the doctor said, "Oh, you do not need to make out a will right away; we can treat rabies." The woman replied, "It is not a will. I am writing a list of all the people I plan to bite!"

When troubles come into our lives, all too often we are ready to respond in the worst possible ways: by lashing out at people (even those who love us), by turning away from God, or by wallowing in self-pity and distress. Trouble does not have to make us bitter, though; it can make us better.

Of all those with opportunity to feel sorry for themselves, consider the apostle Paul. Imprisoned for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul was confined to Rome when he longed to be traveling the world with the message of salvation and visiting the young churches to train and encourage the believers. In the Holy Spirit-inspired epistle that he wrote to the people at Philippi, though, Paul clearly displayed a clear knowledge that to live is Christ.

### **PLEASING CHRIST BY INSPIRING OTHERS—Phil. 1:12-18**

**Inspiration to the lost world (Phil. 1:12-13).** Paul did not ask for sympathy in his letter, nor did he question God's purposes in the circumstances. The "things which happened" to him may simply refer to Paul's imprisonment in Rome, or there may have been new developments to which he referred.

"Perhaps Paul had been moved from his hired house (Acts 28:30) to the Praetorian camp or to some place more accessible to the trial scene. This could easily have been interpreted as bad news, but it had 'really served to advance the gospel'" (Gaebelein, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Zondervan).

How was the gospel advanced? Whether Paul's imprisonment took place in his own hired house or in a more formal prison setting, he constantly came into contact with Roman guards. These men saw Paul's godly response to his circumstances, and they eventually came to realize that this man's imprisonment had resulted not from some criminal enterprise but